

Customs gives bonded carrier licence to...passenger bus

In a sheer violation of its prescribed rules, the customs department has reportedly given a bonded carrier license to a passenger bus, which was later confiscated by Peshawar police after the recovery of substantial quantity of explosive material; it is learnt. There is no mechanism either manual or online to verify the veracity of documents submitted by the transporters to get bonded carrier license albeit the customs department is foreordaining itself for dealing myriad volume of consignments under CPEC. The issue came in limelight when a bonded carrier (JP-6127) was detained at Peshawar after the recovery of substantial quantity of explosive material.

According to details, the Friends Logistics (Pvt) Ltd. loaded a transshipment container (TCLU5288449) on the said carrier to Lahore dry port where duty and taxes were said to be collected. The goods were declared as tiles and tissue papers imported from China on transshipment documents and were loaded on the said passenger bus (JP-6127), which was physically turned to truck after modification. The vehicle destined to Lahore dry port was taken to Peshawar in connivance with the importer Ambal Khan of Dua Enterprise, driver Bilal and other accomplices Noman and Waseem.

Sources said that the vehicle was registered as bond carrier in customs department four days before transporting its first delivery. When contacted, Shahnaz Maqbool, collector, Model Customs Collectorate (MCC), Appraisalment West directed its staff to scrutinize the documents submitted by the transporter for acquiring bonded carrier license.

Later, the officials admitted to have granted bonded carrier license on the basis of unverified excise documents submitted by the transporter, which revealed the status of this passenger bus as truck. However, the online vehicle verification web portal of Sindh Excise and Taxation department tells the different story. It established the status of vehicle as 47 seats passenger bus, which cannot be registered as bonded carrier in the customs department as per prescribed rules.

This correspondent in order to rule out the possibilities of having outdated information posted at the web portal of Sindh Excise department approached Shoaib Siddiqui, Director General Sindh Excise and Taxation department, who also confirmed its status as passenger bus and established that the transporter exploited the customs rules by submitting tampered documents for getting bonded carrier license.

Meanwhile, sources said that unscrupulous elements presented in the customs department always strived to create more complexity in the system in order to shift the responsibility to others in case of any mishap.

The same has been done in this case as the customs department instead of conducting online verification, which is just on a single click away, held the bonded carrier responsible for this crime. However, the bonded carrier (Friend

Logistics), which also failed to verify the documents, gave the rationale that they did not own all vehicles but acquire the same from private transporter and this passenger bus, which got registered in customs department to lift the cargos from port, was owned by private party.

Replying to a question, sources said that the customs authorities instead of keeping blind-eye on system's loopholes, which not only provide rooms for mega corruption but may also facilitate anti-state elements, should advance its system to cope with future requirements after the CPEC.

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